News Release

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RECENT STORMS BRING IMPROVEMENT IN IDAHO SNOWPACK PICTURE

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The series of winter storms that have rolled through Idaho over the past week have resulted in an improved water supply winter snowpack picture across virtually the entire state, the Idaho Department of Water Resources said today.

IDWR water managers say it is far too early in the snow accumulation year to predict water supplies for next year. But at least for the present, snowpack totals are headed in the right direction, in contrast to the past three years of drought. IDWR officials also are quick to caution that the snowpack picture can change dramatically should storm tracks change moving snow producing weather away from the state.

As of today (December 15) 14 of 19 river basins today are showing snowpack water equivalent averages of 100 percent of normal or better. The remaining five are in the 90 percent of normal range. The SNOTEL data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service contrasts sharply with 2002 when the majority of all river basins were recording below normal snow pack figures.

The readings are encouraging in moisture starved Eastern and Southeastern Idaho. Basins serving the Snake River are showing from 110 percent to 124 percent of normal. The Bear River Basin, especially hard hit over the past three years, is recording 91 percent of normal; however, the very dry soil moisture conditions in the Bear drainage will require a snowpack of 115 to 120 percent of normal to yield a near average runoff. In Central Idaho, also hurting for water, the snowpack averages range from 92-114 percent of normal in the five river basins involved.

State water managers say well above-average snowpacks are needed to help replenish state irrigation storage reservoirs depleted by three years of drought. Idaho's snow accumulation season begins in November and ends in March so above average snowpack water management scientists in the season typically do not view readings relatively early with firm optimism, waiting instead until the early part of the new year when better data is available.

Idaho water supply information is available on the IDWR Web Site – www.idwr.state.id.us – under the "Top Picks" section.

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